

# Our Medical Work in India.

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Standing as we do upon the threshold of what will mark an era in the history of the medical work of your mission, it will not be amiss to briefly review the progress made within the last decade in the work of affording medical aid to the women of India.

As is well known, it is now a little more than a quarter of a century since the Methodists inaugurated this work by sending out the first medical lady missionary. Little by little, other societies joined in the work, but until about ten years ago the progress was very gradual and was confined almost entirely to North India. The Lady Dufferin Fund, conceived and executed as it has been, upon a plan worthy of the great philanthropist whose name it bears, has not only of itself, these recent years, afforded relief to hundreds and thousands of women and children, but has also acted as a stimulus to the original source of all medical aid, the Christian church itself; and has led the church to do more in this past decade than in all previous years.

When I arrived in this country there was no lady medical missionary in the whole of the Madras presidency. It was not until two years after my arrival that the General Society of our

own church appointed its first medical missionary.

The need for this work had, however, long been felt. Indeed, in the Madras Mission a great deal of medical work for women had been done by Mrs. Capron, who, though not qualified medically, was very efficient and successful. The same mission had also had a qualified lady for a short time, but she was not a success and soon left.

To-day there are in many places in our presidency, Lady Dufferin dispensaries, and in a few districts, Lady Dufferin hospitals; and almost every mission society has a medical work for women and one or more fully qualified medical women. Just south of us, in the town of Nellore, the Baptists have, within the last year, opened a hospital for women.

In the City of Madras there is, in connection with the Dufferin Fund, the eighty bed Gosha hospital for Mohammedans and high caste Hindus. To this Christians and non-caste Hindus are not admitted. At the other end of the city is the medical mission of the Free Church of Scotland, consisting of a twenty-five bed hospital, two dispensaries and a staff from Scotland of two physicians and a head nurse. The society that supports this work has, within ten years, sent out four lady physicians. The first one sent out is now at home on furlough. The second, one of the most gifted and womanly lady physicians that has come to India, succumbed to cholera a short time after her arrival. The one now at the head of the work was obliged to take entire responsibility after a residence of

about sixteen months, but she has proven equal to the occasion and is very successful.

Some five years ago the Madras Mission built a woman's hospital, but, up to the present time, no lady has been at work in it. However, one has recently come out for that work. No handsomer hospital for women is to be seen in this presidency than the one in Bangalore under the Church of England Zenana Mission. It has accommodation for twenty-four patients, and the staff consists of two physicians and a head nurse. The latter is a grand-niece of Elizabeth Fry and is an honorary missionary, that is, she receives no salary. There are a number of honorary missionaries from England—ladies of means and culture ready to devote both to the work in India.

When I came to India I felt very much the professional isolation to which I was subjected. A stranger in a strange land, I knew not how to commence medical work among a strange people. The only lady to whom I could write for advice lived far away in North India. So I was obliged to pick my way, as it were, in the dark. Necessarily, the progress made was not as great as it might have been had I come to a well established work. The little go down in the back verandah of the Zenana Home did not afford much room for the compounding of prescriptions. The little mat office on the west verandah of the same bungalow was not as convenient for efficient work as is the double office of our new dispensary. And when I recall the difficulty with which I treated the first in-patient in the horse stable, I do not regret that my suc-

cessors will have a more suitable place in which to labor.

While there have been too many interruptions for the medical work of our mission to make very *rapid* progress, it has made *steady* advance, and has more and more drawn patients from the classes for which it is especially intended. \* \*. \* I am glad to say that we have as Bible teacher, one who speaks with power, out of a real Christian experience, and who is influencing many to see in Christ the only Savior for sin.

It has been stated that there are "breakers ahead," among which the future support of the work was mentioned. When, fourteen years ago, the Executive Committee could not see its way clear to send out a medical missionary, there did seem to be a good many "breakers" ahead of the establishment of a medical work in this mission. But with two hundred dollars, one half the gift of a Quaker lady, for instruments and medicines, the work was commenced. Do you blame me, that when I see how from that small beginning, has come a well established medical work and one of the best hospital buildings for women and children in India, I have confidence to believe that the future support of the work will be provided for. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and *they* that dwell therein."

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Published by the General Literature Committee  
OF THE

WOMAN'S HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH.  
(General Synod.)

2319 MARYLAND AVE., BALTIMORE, MD.

1897.

1 CENT EACH.

10 CENTS A DOZEN.